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CAPLES TERRACE: ILS, VHA EASE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

Navigating the foster care system can be a difficult journey for a child even under the best of circumstances. But once that child becomes too old to remain in a foster home, the situation can quickly become worse. Homelessness is not an uncommon first step for some. Others are troubled by an inability to manage their money, feed themselves properly, find employment, and get a high school diploma.

Knowing this, YWCA Clark County has developed a support system for youth who are aging out of foster care. Well in advance of the day foster care will end, young people have YWCA's Independent Living Skills (ILS) program to prepare them for the adult world.

"After what these young people have experienced at an early age, they need a lot of support to make it in the adult world," says Kit Kuran, Director of the Independent Living Skills Program.

Through a powerful partnership with the Vancouver Housing Authority, these youth have the opportunity to find a new home at Caples Terrace, a living facility designed specifically to help young people get launched safely into the world.

Caples Terrace represents the very best in human services partnerships. The Vancouver Housing Authority (VHA) provides the living accommodations, a new three-story apartment complex

"The Independent Living Skills program will provide moral support to me as I become more independent over these next couple of years."

– Jaide



with 28 units for young people transitioning into adult living. Through the VHA's Bridgeview arm, tenants have assistance with all their living needs.

After a bumpy transition from foster care, Jaide Ferrel moved into her Caples Terrace apartment this fall, finding stability, safety, and nearby resources.

"Soon after I turned 18, things got worse where I was living," she says.

A series of moves followed her graduation – until the Caples Terrace apartment became available. "Having a space of my own is great. I can decorate, and I have a great neighbor," she says.

But without the comprehensive resources she accessed at ILS, she might not have been able to handle independent living. Tenants like Jaide

have the ILS program as an ongoing support system. The program prepares future residents to successfully manage living on their own through the ILS classes and mentors, and provides an ILS advocate to work with them on mastering other life skills after they find a home. (Not all Caples Terrace tenants are former foster children.)

"I think ILS has helped prepare me well for living on my own," Jaide says. "If you are having trouble with anything with adulting, someone knows the answer, which is nice, because sometimes you just don't know the answer on your own."

continues on inside right panel

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“Helping people is in my DNA.”

– Bonnie Little

ASSAULT HOTLINE VOLUNTEER FINDS HER CALLING

When the sexual assault hotline operated by YWCA Clark County summons a volunteer advocate, they never know exactly what to expect on the other end of the call. But thanks to the intensive training provided by YWCA, those advocates know what is expected of them.

“You are there to provide support and to listen. The person has just gone through trauma, so you need to remain very calm.”

That’s what volunteer advocate Bonnie Little has learned since joining the Sexual Assault Hotline team two years ago. Bonnie, whose 40-year career as a social worker and high school counselor brought her into contact with an untold number of victims, says the victims and the assaults may vary. But the need for immediate support following an attack is a constant.

Bonnie is among some two dozen advocates who cover calls 24/7 coming from hospitals, victims, and family members. The hotline number (360-695-0501), which also takes domestic violence calls, is one of the many services offered only by YWCA in the Clark County area.

When the phone rings in YWCA’s domestic violence shelter, an advocate answers and determines which team should follow up: Domestic Violence or Sexual Assault. Calls forwarded to Sexual Assault come from a variety of callers: hospital officials who have just admitted an assault victim, recent victim, and those who have carried their wound many years and just need to talk about it.

When the call comes from a hospital, an advocate goes to the hospital. The job may require several hours or more, Bonnie says, as the victim waits for a sexual assault nurse examiner to arrive and undergoes a forensic medical examination. During that time, the advocate is there so that the victim is never alone, never without an empathetic listener and a trained observer, someone who can inform them of their legal right as a sexual assault victim and inform them of available community resources.

Becoming a hotline advocate isn’t light volunteer duty. Its time

commitments are substantial: approximately 40 hours of intensive training, then being on call at least two days a month.

Bonnie and program specialists say an ideal candidate must have a flexible schedule, an empathetic personality, and must know the difference between supporting a victim and trying to fix them.

Although Bonnie is retired and can more easily devote the necessary time to advocacy, she believes the role can be an excellent one for young people who are considering a career in social work. She says the experience of dealing directly with victims can help someone know whether this is the right fit for them. And, if it is, it can be a good resume booster.

Bonnie not only works her hotline stint every month, but also co-facilitates a YWCA group for victims. “Helping people is in my DNA,” she says. And YWCA provides the opportunity to fully activate her DNA.

Contact Haddy Jobe today to learn more about volunteering.
hjobe@ywcaclarkcounty.org or 360-906-9112

CREATIVE PLANNED GIFT CREATES BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR YWCA

It was just a year ago that Lee Faver and Mel Netzhammer made a major life decision: They would restructure their estate plans and define a specific planned gift for YWCA Clark County. But this was no traditional bequest.



Mel and Lee

Instead, as insiders with considerable knowledge about the challenges of funding a nonprofit with an ambitious mission, they laid out a gift designed to support the entire organization rather than just one or two programs. Because of their deep understanding of nonprofits and their financial needs, Lee and Mel were able to structure a gift that will keep on giving for many years. Those are the kinds of gifts YWCA highly values.

We asked Lee and Mel to talk about the circumstances that led up to their innovative planned gift. Excerpts from their written responses to our questions follow:

When did you first get involved with YWCA Clark County?

Lee: I was introduced to YWCA-CC by a former board member shortly after Mel and I moved to Vancouver in 2012. I attended the annual luncheon that fall where I met board members and donors who were committed to the Y. I realized the warm regard with which YWCA is held in the community.

How did your passion for YWCA's work in the community grow?

Lee: I've completed my sixth year as a board member during which I've seen first hand the commitment, skill and integrity of the staff to the work and to the clients. When I first arrived, I did not know the integrity with which the organization is led or conducts itself day to day. I discovered that while serving on the board. Learning about each program, getting to know the staff and understanding the types of challenges clients face fosters my further commitment. It's hard not to be passionate!

How does YWCA's mission reflect your personal values?

Lee: YWCA-CC has a very clear, bold mission statement and set of values that resonates. Along with the incredible clients, our staff breathe life into the mission and values. Honestly, people who work at the Y really endeavor to live the values each day. It's also quite impressive that they're integrated into board discussion about programs, priorities, budget, fair compensation and benefits. This means that Y employees are treated with the same integrity as the clients. THAT's an organization I want to serve and financially support philanthropically.

Philanthropy is particularly important to Mel, whose background emphasized service and making a contribution to public wellbeing. He understands that leadership involves living one's values and modeling what you want to engender in others. The Y community does this too.

Tell us about how you decided to structure your gift.

Lee: The discussions Mel and I had about our estate included a lot more conversation about what we want to accomplish or influence. Like most nonprofits, the Y runs very, very lean. Programs are largely grant-based and that means that every one of those dollars is allocated. There's little on which to run the administration, to maintain the building, to protect retention of the most experienced and talented staff with appropriate compensation.

The Y has a small endowment that was well conceived and funded by past board leaders. Those resources are intact today because of disciplined management and some more significant contributions that were directed to fund programs over time. But the financial challenges never cease, nor do resources match demand.

“Honestly, people who work at the Y really endeavor to live the values each day.”

Our planned giving intention is to create a line of credit so that the Executive Director can respond to circumstances and cash flow issues without pressure on client programs and services, hours, or staff retention.

People's lives are really affected by how well the Y operates. Our goal is to help the leadership team adapt effectively when those situations arise.

Find more articles on our blog at ywcaclarkcounty.org

BOARD SPOTLIGHT: RAFIK FOUAD

Rafik Fouad joined YWCA Clark County's volunteer corps in 2008 with its Independent Life Skills program. The financial advisor with First Pacific Financial now serves on YWCA's board of directors. We spoke with Rafik about how YWCA has changed his life.

What attracted you to the ILS program?

When I inquired about ways to help [YWCA], the Volunteer Director suggested I go to the first all-volunteer meeting. At the meeting, I found a foosball table in the ILS room and was hooked. I found it most natural to bond with the youth in ILS with a healthy competitive spirit. Once connected, it was easier to help them with the life skills they were seeking.

What keeps you connected to ILS?

Supporting foster youth who are aging out of the system as they navigate the complex world of being an adult has been an amazing experience: helping these young adults get better at understanding money, furnishing their first apartment, obtaining an education, and getting their first job.

What are the rewards of volunteering for YWCA?

I have the career I do today due to the connections I've made. I joined the finance committee to build my professional resume. Little did I know that another member of the committee would eventually introduce me to the business that I work for today. The YWCA has given me more than I've given.

Read more on our blog at ywcaclarkcounty.org



Hilaree Prepula of the Vancouver Housing Authority (left) and Kit Kuran, Director of YWCA's Independent Living Skills Program, at Caples Terrace

CAPLES TERRACE *continued from cover*

Better still, Caples Terrace is located in the Skyline community, where resources for youth are located in close proximity. It means wrap-around services all in one location.

"And most of Caples Terrace's residents are going to need that kind of support," says Hilaree Prepula, Community and Social Services Manager for Vancouver Housing Authority.

"A lot of our young people come in with tremendous gaps in how to manage adult life," she says.

"They may have employment, but they don't know the difference between paying rent versus a car loan. Some did not even understand how to pay bills.

"We have great partners like YWCA that are not just instrumental in providing referrals, but also quality care through the ILS advocate who is there throughout the process. YWCA's ILS program and advocates are the constant that they need in order to have a much higher chance of becoming more stable."

Kuran says the innovative Caples Terrace partnership has been a wonderful opportunity, as ILS has been able to refer many youth with limited incomes to the housing complex knowing that they will continue to receive support after they move in. "I believe the stability that Caples Terrace can offer will help these young families improve the lives of their children and future generations, breaking the cycle of abuse and poverty that they may have grown up with."

For Jaide, having the ILS program and case worker on her side is making all the difference in transitioning to adulthood.

"ILS will provide moral support to me as I become more independent over these next couple of years," she says. "It's like those minuscule things that you don't think about. You're like, 'How do I do that?' So you go to your ILS worker and they're like, 'Oh, let me show you,' and all of a sudden you know it."

SAFECHOICE HELPED HER FIND STRENGTH, HEAL AND GIVE BACK

It took Camille Marcotte six years to realize her partner was abusing her. “I was in a fog about it,” she says. “It becomes the normal way of living.” But when she awoke to what was going on – and to the threat to her children – she decided to take back her life.

But after years of victimhood, breaking free of her abuser proved a monumental task. Without help from YWCA Clark County’s SafeChoice program, she might not have made it. And although nearly a decade has passed since she took shelter among her SafeChoice peers, she still finds a way to give back to the program.

Camille grew up in Clark County, but moved to Dayton, OH, to be with the man she loved – or thought she did. The relationship was complicated, and as her partner slowly isolated her from her friends and turned their home into a prison, she became trapped without realizing how it had happened.

What triggered her escape was a marriage counselor’s threat to take away the two children she had with her abuser, who was married to another woman. “When I reported that I had been abused, the counselor said because the kids witnessed it,

they had been abused as well. And if I did not leave him, the state would take them away.”

Camille says she fled from Dayton to Portland “with just the clothes on my back” to escape the man. There, friends took her in, and she eventually found her way to SafeChoice.



The stories she heard from the others in her SafeChoice Support Group were powerful and confirmed her experience was not unique. “But I got the most knowledge with the educational class,” she says. “I didn’t know what boundaries were. Learning about boundaries, how to set them, how to maintain them, made me a stronger person.”

She also learned how strong she could be. She fell in love with a local man, Grant, who, two years into their relationship, was killed in a boating accident. She still feels a deep hole in

her heart for him. But she has stayed strong for her children, and for other women in abusive relationships.

Although Camille, who works two jobs, has limited means, she found a way to give back to SafeChoice: Rock the Awareness events. With friends, she began organizing several Rock the Awareness music events, to both raise awareness about domestic violence and raise funds for SafeChoice. The series of annual concerts – in both Vancouver and Portland – have led to donations of nearly \$10,000 to SafeChoice. The most recent events were at the Heavy Metal Brewing Co. in Vancouver, which Camille believes will become the SafeChoice fundraiser’s permanent home.

“Someone asked me after Grant’s death what I was doing about domestic abuse,” she says. She had been missing him so much, she says, that the friend’s question suggested to her a way to heal, by giving back to others. “I decided I could do something. And, with the help of a lot of people, I have.”

Rock the Awareness was born. And while Camille will always have a hole in her heart where Grant once lived, that same heart has been enriched by her support of SafeChoice.

Photos Courtesy of Camille Marcotte



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– Camille Marcotte

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BUILDING BRIDGES TO A HEALTHIER COMMUNITY

When organizational missions align, good things can happen. Case in point: **PeaceHealth Southwest Medical Center** and YWCA Clark County.

Recently, PeaceHealth approved a grant request from YWCA to support the **Y's Care Preschool** and **Independent Living Skills (ILS)** programs. But because the community service missions of both the healthcare system and YWCA are such a perfect fit, PeaceHealth decided to double the financial commitment requested by the grant.

Outcome? \$100,000 over the next two years: \$50,000 for Ys Care, \$50,000 for ILS.

Renate "Rainy" Atkins knows both sides of the grant transaction well. Atkins, a former PeaceHealth Southwest

executive, just finished her tenure as a YWCA board member. She serves on PeaceHealth Southwest's Community Health Board. These two roles have led



Renate "Rainy" Atkins

to a true appreciation of what like-minded organizations can accomplish.

"The mission of both organizations is providing healing services to our community. It all fits together like a beautiful jigsaw puzzle," she says. "The PeaceHealth Community Needs

Committee said, 'Why aren't we giving them two years, given what their goals are?' So we did."

Rainy says the Independent Living Skills program is vital to young people transitioning from foster care to the adult world. In the same way, she says,

Y's Care Preschool helps young children transition from pre-school to school age.

The PeaceHealth grants also demonstrate a deeper understanding of the youth and families the two YWCA programs serve, says Kit Kuran, ILS program director.

"Their ILS grant funds treatment for physical health problems that our ILS youth experience," she says. "It can be difficult to get funding designated for supporting behavioral, physical, and mental health needs. Yet a lot of the youth aging out of foster care do have health issues that can be very expensive. PeaceHealth understands that part of their challenge."

With PeaceHealth and YWCA, it is all about the bridges – to kindergarten, to adulthood, to a successful life, to a healthier community. It's working, thanks to bridge builders like Rainy Atkins.

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